

Pastor David Anglada' Message Outline
Grace Lutheran Church and School
Malverne, New York
www.glcas.org

"The Struggle Within," Romans 7:15-25
5th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, July 5th, 2020

The Holy Gospel, **Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30**

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your been handed over to me by my except the Father, and no one knows anyone to whom the Son chooses to you that are weary and are carrying rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and and humble in heart, and you will yoke is easy, and my burden is light."



gracious will. 27 All things have Father; and no one knows the Son the Father except the Son and reveal him. 28 "Come to me, all heavy burdens, and I will give you learn from me; for I am gentle find rest for your souls. 30 For my

Romans 7: ¹⁵ "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"¹

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Prayer for Illumination:

Startle us, O God, with your truth and open our hearts and our minds to your wondrous love. Speak your word to us; silence in us any voice but your own and be with us now as we turn our attention, our minds, and our hearts, to you, in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Grace and peace my sisters and brothers, when I was about eight years my mother said to me David, I am going next door to visit with Martha Rodriguez for about fifteen minutes, I will be back quickly. Now, before her visit, mother had warned me not touched the cookies she had baked. Mother left to visit Mrs. Rodriguez within five minutes of her departure, guess what I did? You are correct; I ate not one cookie; I ate two oatmeal cookies. My good friends, I was elated. I was in haven.

Mother, arrived within fifteen minutes as she promised, she looked at me and said, David, did you have a cookie, I froze, I can still hear my mother voice, David did you eat a cookie? Can you guess my response? I first said no, and my mother looked at me with her piercing eyes and said David, did you eat a cookie? I knew I had gotten caught, why, I saw, what she first observed when she came back from Mrs. Rodriguez's home. The crumbs of cookies on my mouth and shirt. I responded I got hungry and was not sure when you were coming back. Plus, oatmeal cookies are healthy. Mother, in a loud voice, said David go to your room!

St. Paul said, "For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I should not do or hate."

These were the words of St. Paul when writes to the Roman house churches² around the year 57 (CE)³. The only difference is that Paul tells the truth that he struggles with his humanity. Let' us listen to the words of St. Paul: I am using the message bible:

"Yes. I am full of myself—after all, I have spent a long time in sin's prison. What I do not understand about myself is that I decide one way, but then I act another, doing things I absolutely despise. So, if I cannot be trusted to figure out what is best for myself and then do it, it becomes obvious that God's command is necessary.

But I need something *more*! For if I know the law but still cannot keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I do

² Katherine Grieb A., *The Story of Romans-A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2002),1

³ Wayne A. Meeks ed., *The Writings of St. Paul* (W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1972), 66.

not have what it takes. I can it, but I cannot *do* it. I decide to do good, but I do not *really* do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, do not result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so often that it is predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it is obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I have tried everything, and nothing helps. I am at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.⁴

I find St. Paul to be authentic as well as transparent by confessing that he has challenges in his spiritual journey. Let us think about this for a moment. St. Paul does not know the Christians living in Rome. However, he pours out his heart out to them.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul communicates to the Roman house churches that he is "called" to be an apostle of Christ. That he is not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. That he is obedient to Christ, that he has been free in Christ and no longer a slave to sin moreover that he seeks to live a life of holiness. Additionally, he says that the life of a Christian is to be dead to sin and alive to God. But now, in chapter 7, Paul keeps it real, I have my struggles. "For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

St. Paul personalizes the struggle of someone torn between submission to sin, and the freedom of a life lived with God. Paul also had his demons; he had his inner conflicts within him. Let us not be too judgmental of St. Paul, we all have our internal struggles.

The man who once said, "on the road to Damascus on a journey suddenly a light from heaven flashed around me." "I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, LORD?" I asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:3-8)

The man who becomes one of the leaders of the early church is being challenged or struggling spiritually; there is an internal struggle or fight inside of him. Paul says I want to do good. However, I entertain what I should not be doing.

⁴ The Message (MSG), Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Imagine a little stone that enters your shoe, and when you are walking, walking becomes a challenge until you remove that little stone. Better yet, St. Paul had his own Achilles heel, an Achilles' heel, is a weakness despite overall strength.

In Greek mythology, Achilles was a hero of the Trojan War, the greatest of all the Greek warriors. However, Paris, also known as Alexander another Greek warrior, knew that Achilles had a weakness, Paris shot Achilles⁵ in the heel with an arrow. Achilles had a vulnerable heel. We all have an Achilles heel. So did St. Paul.

My good friends, like St. Paul, we will all have our struggles and challenges in our lives.

What are your thorns in the flesh, or what is your Achilles heel?

The great apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh. However, St. Paul understood how the grace of God in Jesus Christ changes everything: Paul says “wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

This is the declaration of forgiveness that becomes a declaration of freedom. It is the liberating word that our blessed Lord Jesus promises us, we are never hopeless or finally lost; even the worst of us is never irredeemable or unlovable.⁶

Even if we descend into utter darkness, even if we can never quite climb into the light, nothing shall separate us from the Love of God.

People of God this liberating grace of Christ that redeems not only our vices but our virtues too. We are set free to joyfully seek the will of God in the confidence that God redeems and is making all things new for all of us.

My good sisters and brothers, yes, you will have your struggles within. However, our blessed Lord Jesus will strengthen us to overcome all our temptations and struggles we face daily.

How do we overcome our inward challenges: by being honest with yourself that you need help, confess to God your difficulties, tell God that you need assistance with your difficulties, that you are helpless, embrace God's grace and forgiveness and enjoy the life God has given you.

Equally important live your life with gratitude, God has forgiven you also that God has set you free from the slavery of sin. Perhaps you are just tired of having sin or your daily struggles take

⁵ Paris and Achilles, Greek Mythology.

⁶ Patrick W. T. Johnson, Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia Lo. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, Connections-A Lectionary Commentary for Preaching and Worship (WJK, Louisville, 2020) 133.

the best from you. I would like to suggest the following to you, just turn your life and will over to Jesus.

Jesus tells us this morning take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

I end with my message with the following question, what do you hear God saying to you personally today?

Response to the Word: In Christ, we are invited to lay our burdens down and to accept the rest and renewal that God gives. Let us take a moment in silent reflection, as we reflect on how to accept this invitation and discover new joy on our journeys of faith. Amen.⁷

Again, thank you, for joining us today, I hope you will join us Sunday, morning at 10 am. You can join us by going to website at www.glcas.org.

Remember God loves you and cares about you.

⁷ Marry Scifres and B.J. Beu ed. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020 (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2019), 149.